



# Haz Mat Release

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
HEALTH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION

## Los Angeles County Man Arrested Charged with Impersonating a Fire Department Officer

By Memo Hernandez, Investigations Unit

**MARCH 2006**

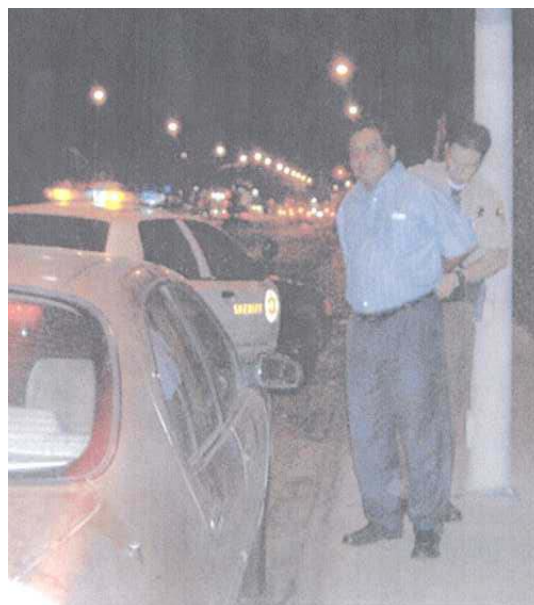
**Featured Unit:  
Site Mitigation\***

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Joseph Ramiro Beeson, 39, of Downey, was arrested and convicted of one felony charge of impersonating an officer (Hazardous Materials Specialist) and one felony count of extortion. The case was prepared by the Investigations Unit of the Health Hazardous Materials Division (HHMD) and was prosecuted by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's (DA) Office.

In 2004, over a period of several months, Beeson, who also called himself "Mr. Green," impersonated an HHMD Officer of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The extortion scam involved Beeson presenting himself as an inspector from the Fire Department who was there to verify compliance regarding the proper management of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes. At numerous businesses, Beeson would accuse the victims of not being in compliance with environmental laws and would threaten to shut them down if they failed to pay a bogus fine/permit.



**Sheriff handcuffs Beeson after Lynwood Code Enforcement calls HHMD**

Beeson would enter the business with a clipboard and Los Angeles County Fire Department documents. He would conduct "inspections" and ask for hazardous waste manifests, CUPA permits, and other documents. (Beeson had previously worked in the environmental field for numerous companies as a salesman, so he was familiar with these forms). He would extort as much as \$400 in a few minutes from his victims, small business owners not fluent in English or

unfamiliar with regulatory requirements, who feared Beeson's threats of government action against them.

On September 22, 2004, Beeson visited an auto body shop in Lynwood where he demanded cash, threatened to close the business, and even claimed to be the Fire Chief. The business owner became suspicious, but agreed that Beeson could return later that day for a cash payment.

## Impersonator *continued from page 1*

*HHMD  
Investigators found  
Notices of  
Violations, checks,  
receipts, and  
payment contracts  
among the items in  
Beeson's possession.*

When Beeson returned to collect his money, he was met by City of Lynwood Code Enforcement Officers who had been called by the shop owner. These city officers contacted the LA County Sheriff's and Fire Departments. HHMD Special Operations Section investigators interviewed the victims and questioned Beeson. He told investigators that he was "providing a service" and was working for himself – a company called Compliance Services. As a result of those interviews, Beeson was placed under arrest that evening. When arrested, Beeson was wearing a clear plastic name tag holder containing the business card of an HHMD inspector.

demanded payment for a non-existent "Special Permit." He also scheduled return dates according to receipts found. In another instance, he had visited an auto body shop five times to demand an outstanding balance. Victims described Beeson as demanding and angry, and said that he would get quite upset if he did not receive his payments.

The HHMD investigation took several months and required hundreds of interviews with victims and witnesses. It took all four of HHMD's Special Operations Section investigators—Memo Hernandez, Stan Townsend, Paul Biren, and Jim McCarron—to develop the case and enable the Los Angeles County DA's Office to bring about the successful prosecution of the suspect.

According to HHMD investigators, the case was difficult because most of the victims were scared and hesitant to speak out. In addition, many of the business owners did not know that they had fallen victim to an impersonator. HHMD investigators had to put the victims at ease by identifying themselves several times with multiple sources of identification. The victims understood the nature of the investigation once it was explained that Hazardous Materials Specialists do not take cash for any type of service.

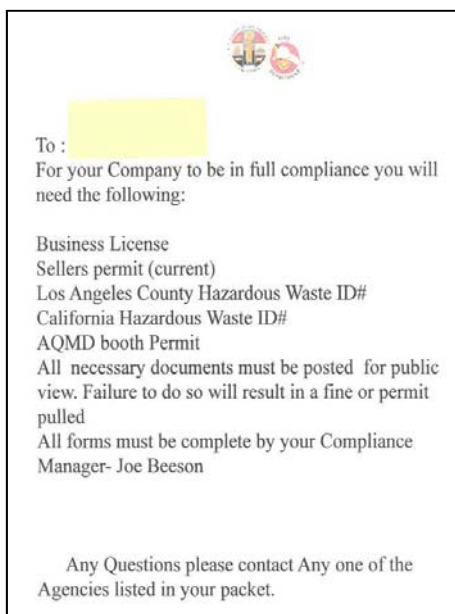
In addition to the felony counts of impersonation and extortion,

Beeson was sentenced to 50 days of CalTrans work, five years' probation, ordered to pay restitution to all of the victims, and received a court order to stay away from all of the victims.

HHMD was particularly interested in having this person charged and convicted because this kind of scam negatively affects our image and spoils our efforts and those of other agencies to bring businesses into compliance with environmental laws. The victimized business owners thought that they had paid to have their violations "forgotten." They were rather surprised when actual HHMD personnel showed up to conduct real inspections and notified them that they needed to correct their violations and come into compliance.

HHMD investigators remind business owners and operators that there are several ways to guard your business against being victimized by an impersonator:

- Always ask for picture identification.
- Obtain a contact phone number.
- Ask for the name of the inspector's supervisor.
- Never pay any inspector cash.
- Verify any charges before paying by contacting the Fire Department's Financial Management Division at (323) 838-2345.



Business cards as well as scanned documents containing the Fire Department logo were seized as evidence the night of his arrest. Later, search warrants served on his home and on his vehicle by HHMD investigators found Notices of Violations, checks, receipts, and payment contracts among the items in Beeson's possession.

At one auto repair shop, Beeson had left a Notice of Violation (containing the Fire Department's logo) along with a written schedule of payments for alleged HHMD services. For businesses that had all their permits, Beeson

**Document created  
by impersonator**

## Bill's Corner

In the last several years, the Health Hazardous Materials Division (HHMD) has embarked on various efforts to ensure that all appropriate facilities are captured within our regulatory program. At the same time, the HHMD is dealing with facilities that fail to pay permit fees by vigorously pursuing enforcement to the fullest extent of the law.

The number of facilities within our jurisdiction continues to grow due to a number of factors:

1. Enhanced efforts to capture all facilities,
2. The addition of new cities such as La Habra and Signal Hill,
3. The number of businesses increasing in high growth areas such as the Antelope Valley, and
4. The regulatory universe continuing to expand (e.g. universal waste or possibly above ground storage tanks in the future).

The impacts of the increased workloads are being seen throughout California. Many jurisdictions are having difficulties reallocating or adding resources as the demands increase and must look at different ways to prioritize workload demands. Local programs have been asked to examine their staffing and program costs in new and better ways to meet mandates and regulatory responsibilities.

In LA County, inspection frequencies for hazardous waste generators are the same whether they are high risk or low risk

facilities. Underground storage tank sites are inspected annually and high risk Cal-ARP facilities have triennial inspection requirements. Many have felt that certain industries with poor compliance histories or a record of recent spills or releases should be inspected more often.

All these factors have led to a proposition to examine the concepts involved in the Unified Program Regulatory Performance Model (UPRPM). A statewide workgroup has recently begun to examine the parameters that dictate what we consider priorities and how to adjust resources to address them. New options are being considered to refocus and enhance our presence at high risk or problematic facilities and de-emphasize or change the way low risk or compliant facilities are regulated.

The nine elements of the UPRPM are described as components of an "ideal" regulatory program and include the obvious inspection and enforcement components but also things like regulatory universe identification, compliance verification, standard setting, education outreach, implementation, coordination and metrics.

State and local agencies appear to be on the same page about the idea of changing from evaluating the success of local programs based on the number of inspections to a method that has measurable objectives such as increased compliance in specified areas. For example, if a UP were to choose six regulatory requirements and

measure the compliance increase or decrease over a period of time by efforts through the UPRPM, it would be nice to show that compliance in certain business sectors has increased. These efforts might include enhanced inspections or enforcement, training and educational efforts, or other tools to encourage compliance.

It is inherent to the UPRPM that high risk, recalcitrant or problematic facilities or areas (for example the jewelry mart or Wilmington initiatives) receive enhanced attention with more frequent or focused inspections and clear expectations of enforcement for specific conditions. It seems logical that we focus attention on facilities that cause problems or are a high risk based on the type and volume of materials handled.

Needless to say, rolling out the UPRPM will be a complex task. The timeframe is to continue work in 2006 on developing the concepts then introduce enabling legislation in 2007 for implementation sometime in 2008. Critical to the success of this effort is an understanding and marketing effort to make sure people understand that this proposal will not lead to any level of deregulation. Also, the model will not be for every UP - only certain UPAs will take advantage of this voluntary program. However, the elements of an ideal regulatory program will be promoted and encouraged.

The UPRPM demonstrates the continuing changes and challenges we face in our chosen profession. I'll keep you up to date as this effort develops.



Bill Jones, HHMD Chief

*"It seems logical that we focus attention on facilities that cause problems or are a high risk based on the type and volume of materials handled."*



## Two More Cities Join LA County CUPA By Lance Ralston, Administration-Planning Section

**T**wo new cities are now under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County CUPA-HHMD.

Signal Hill took action some time ago to dissolve the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the City of Long Beach. The City of Long Beach recently took formal action to dissolve the JPA and delivered their file information to HHMD on the 125 hazardous waste generator inspections and 191 hazardous materials handlers within the City of Signal Hill. The Paramount district office will now be responsible for the inspection of these facilities.

The City of La Habra in Orange County has voted to become a contract city for fire protection services provided by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. HHMD has finalized and the Board of Supervisors has approved a Participating Agency agreement with the Orange County Health Authority to implement the disclosure program in the City of La Habra. As a result, 167 hazardous materials handlers in the City will be added to the rolls of responsibility for the Paramount district.



**W**elcome Signal Hill and La Habra, we look forward to serving you.

## Health Risk Assessment Availability By Shahin Nourishad, Site Mitigation Unit

*Soon SMU will be able to also accept residential developments requiring a health risk assessment reviewed by a toxicologist.*

The Site Mitigation Unit (SMU) of the Health Hazardous Materials Division (HHMD) provides voluntary oversight for remediation of contaminated sites within the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County CUPA and the cities of Los Angeles and Santa Monica. The majority of the sites under SMU oversight are industrial/commercial properties that retain their industrial/commercial use. However, due to land value appreciation, population growth and a need for additional housing, some of these industrial/commercial properties are being re-zoned for residential development. At residential developments, it is preferable to remediate soil contamination to non-detect or background concentrations to minimize any potential health risk. Because of economical and/or technical feasibility it is not always possible to remove contaminants to non-detect or background concentrations.

To evaluate the potential health risks from residual contaminants posed to the current/future occupant of the site, a health risk assessment (HRA) is required. It is preferable (and soon will be required) that HRAs be reviewed by a Toxicologist. To achieve this goal, SMU has established a contract with the State Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), to have their Toxicologists perform this function. OEHHA will review, evaluate and if appropriate, approve the risk assessment. When requested, OEHHA Toxicologists will provide SMU with consultation services on issues concerning human health and/or environmental risks.

The contract with OEHHA will not have a financial impact on HHMD. Under the SMU oversight agreement, the property owner/developer will be required to reimburse HHMD for the cost incurred by OEHHA review. With the OEHHA contract in place, SMU will be able to readily accept all types of sites, including residential developments.

For additional information regarding site mitigation, please check our website, or search those of the Department of Toxic Substances Control or the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

### WEBSITES

[www.lacofd.org/healthhazmat/hhmdsitemitigation.asp](http://www.lacofd.org/healthhazmat/hhmdsitemitigation.asp)  
[www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov)  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov)



## Whittier's Greenway Trail

This project is an example of a city and this Department's effort to work together toward a common goal. The improvement of property to benefit the community and the environment by transforming a contaminated useless strip that previously invited illegal dumping and other unwanted activities. The City of Whittier purchased a railroad right-of-way (ROW) for development as a recreational bike/pedestrian trail. The Whittier Greenway Trail utilizes 4.5 miles of former railroad ROW that passes through residential, commercial and industrial areas of the City.

Among the contaminants of concern detected at this property was arsenic. Elevated concentrations of arsenic have consistently been detected at most ROWs, due to the use of slag ballast, treated railroad ties and the use of herbicides on/near the tracks.

The determination of a remediation goal for arsenic is one of the main problems/concerns in developing ROWs because nationwide background concentrations exceed the residential "Preliminary Remediation Goal" (PRG) of 0.39 ppm. Since this ROW has elevated arsenic concentrations throughout the entire 4.5 miles, with a maximum of 100 ppm and an average of 30.7 ppm, the City of Whittier worked with HHMD's Site Mitigation Unit to find an alternative to excavation of arsenic contaminated soil.

A health risk assessment (HRA) was prepared to evaluate the potential risk posed to future users of the greenway trail and the adjacent residents, because remediation of this site, using the PRG, would require excavation of the top 1-3 feet of soil along the entire 4.5 miles of the site (width of 40-100 feet). Based on the results of the HRA, a soil management plan

By Kim Clark, Site Mitigation Unit

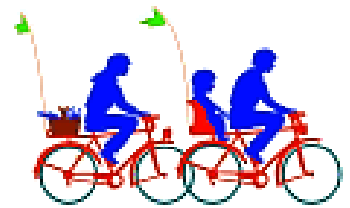
was developed which would minimize the risk to the trail users and the residences that abut the trail.

The soil management plan requires areas not capped by asphalt (bike path) or decomposed granite (walking path) to be covered with vegetation and 6"-12" of mulch material to minimize dispersion of the arsenic into the air. There will also be a culvert on both sides of the trail to prevent any runoff onto the adjacent residential properties. A written operation and maintenance plan will also be in effect, that requires the City to maintain vegetation and continuous coverage of the bare soil.

In addition to the arsenic contamination, there are also two areas of near-surface debris fill contaminated with hazardous waste that will be remediated by excavation and off-site disposal. In the near future, the City of Whittier will have a great recreational trail which can be enjoyed by all.



*Elevated concentrations of arsenic have consistently been detected at most right-of-way's, due to the use of slag ballast, treated railroad ties and the use of herbicides on/near the tracks.*



## Communications Update

By Frank Cervantes, Emergency Operations Section

The Division currently has communication capabilities through pagers, cell phones, blue channel handheld radios, blue and white channel vehicle mounted radios, Mobile Data Terminals and now County Wide Integrated Radio System (CWIRS) handheld radios, base stations and remote base stations. The CWIRS hardware and accessories (which include multiple bank battery chargers, vehicle mounted radio chargers and re-

mote (lapel) microphones) have been provided to the HHMD by federal grant monies through the LA County DHS Disaster Preparedness Coordinator. We have received thirty four (34) handheld radios that will be vehicle assigned and each HHMD satellite office will have both a base station and remote base station in case we have to decentralize emergency operations during a significant event.

The CWIRS P7100 radio is a top of the line, intrinsically safe handheld that will allow us to talk internally among ourselves and to other county departments exclusive of Sheriff and Fire. We will be able to communicate with Public Works (both Flood Control and Road Maintenance), the Sanitation Districts (i.e., the landfills, the sewer inspectors, water reclamation / treatment plants), the Coroner, and

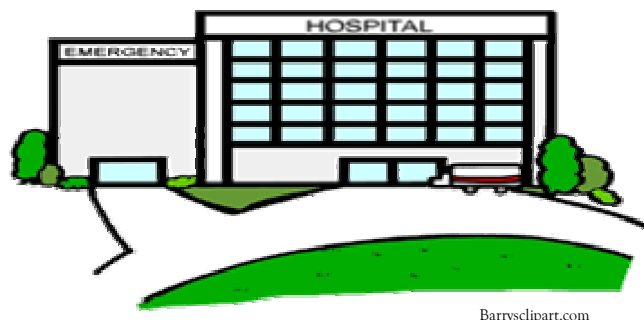


*Continued on page 12*

## A Mercury Incident

By Mario Benjamin, Emergency Operations Section

This turned out to be the biggest mercury clean-up project we've ever responded to. It was a Thursday and it started like any other on-call day - unpredictable with potential for the wild. We had already been out on a couple of abandoned container incidents around downtown L.A. and were on the way back to the Commerce Headquarters when a call came, sending our team to a hospital.



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We didn't think much about the call right away and wondered what the big deal was. Mercury spills at a hospital? Why not? That's where all kinds of thermometers and manometers and all other kinds of meters that work with mercury are found. Except this hospital's incident with mercury proved to be one for the record books.

The entire sterilization section, located on the first floor of the hospital, was cordoned off with barrier tape. Groups of people were passing by and going about their business, apparently unaware of any incident. Establishing what had happened and what the hospital was doing was first on our agenda, along with obtaining their incident health and safety (H&S) plan. Hospital personnel explained that they were engaged in detailed fact-finding before contacting all the proper authorities. This, they stated, was in order to have more information that could prove useful to the agencies, including Health HazMat.

The fact is that regulations require **notification upon recognition of the hazard**, not after obtaining an understanding of the full scope of the incident nor until the facility thinks they are better able to give useful information. At this incident: an employee of the hospital inadvertently placed a number of esophageal dilators in a steam-based sterilizer and started the sterilization process.

These particular dilators were mercury filled and should have been put into the gas-based sterilizer. Mercury expands with added heat or pressure which is exactly what happened when these mercury-filled esophageal dilators were placed in a steam sterilizer. That sterilization room and an adjoining one were linked together by conveyor belts and steel trap doors that routinely received hundreds of pieces of equipment and instruments used in surgery.



It didn't take long before a pressure-type explosion blew open the door to the sterilizer. Liquid mercury went flying into the air, spilling all over the sterilization room, including adjoining spaces and cracks. Appropriately, the drain holes were plugged. But, those entering the contaminated room carried the mercury contamination away with them.



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Continued on page 7

**Mercury continued from page 6**

It was a clean-up and displacement nightmare. The initial report of a 16-pound release was fortunately wrong. We were dealing with no more than eight pounds of mercury in all. This incident accentuates our need to always remind facilities that immediate notification is required and that a H&S plan is important and essential during an incident.

Mercury occurs naturally in rocks and minerals mixed mainly in sulfide ores (cinnabar). Its forms are metallic mercury, inorganic mercury compounds and organo-mercury compounds (methylmercury). It is toxic and causes significant human health and environmental problems. Mercury damages organs like the brain, liver and kidneys. Extracted metallic or elemental mercury is a liquid. Many common consumer products like thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs, barometers, medical equipment like the dilators here and other instruments use liquid mercury, as do the mercury switches in children's sneakers that light up. Mercury, like any spilled liquid, evaporates and goes into the air as a vapor. We therefore concentrated primarily on elemental, metallic mercury from the dilators, generating vapors.



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Very small amounts of metallic mercury (for example, a few drops) can raise air concentrations of mercury to levels that may be harmful to health. The longer people breathe the contaminated air, the greater the risk to their health. These vapors are colorless and odorless and the higher the temperature, the more vapors release. When mercury vapors are breathed in, eighty percent of the mercury enters the bloodstream directly from the lungs, and then rapidly goes to other parts of the body, including the brain and the kidneys. When metallic mercury enters the brain, it readily converts to the inorganic form and is "trapped" in the brain for a long time. Most of the metallic mercury will accumulate in the kidneys, but some can also accumulate in the brain.

Ensuring the removal of mercury contamination along with its proper and legal disposal is never a trifling task. Some of the challenge here were:

- Extensive contaminated floor tile removal and replacement;
- Dismantling and removal of contaminated units, including the sterilizer itself;
- An off-site decontamination line, under tents and closely monitored, ran for long periods of time, until all that could be cleaned, was cleaned

and that which could not was set aside as contaminated hazardous waste;

- Working with a clean-up company for compliance with all our directives and consideration of our suggestions; and
- Air samples collection and analysis to document safe mercury levels for the workers and to document the public re-occupancy decision.

Our responsibility for having the final word regarding when a site can safely be reopened for use and/or to the public is why **no incident is a trifling matter**. This incident cost that hospital more than \$1.7 million to clean up someone's mistake for a relatively small amount of material. Again, we cannot overstress how important recognizing the significance of the threat to human health, safety, or the environment is in relation to the volume of the waste, its relative hazardousness and the proximity of the population at risk. Prevention is always our best tool. Let's work on getting our facilities to properly train personnel, post hazard information, prepare their business/contingency plans and, regarding mercury—encourage them to change to mercury free products. For now, my partner and I will take a broken thermometer for our next mercury spill any day.

*"Let's work on getting our facilities to properly train personnel, post hazard information, prepare their business/contingency plans and, regarding mercury—encourage them to change to mercury free products."*

For more information on mercury, check these websites:

[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/alerts](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/alerts)

[www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/quick\\_topics/publications/shw/mercury/hg\\_home.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/waste/quick_topics/publications/shw/mercury/hg_home.pdf)

[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

[www.nihe.org/multimedia](http://www.nihe.org/multimedia) Look for: Survey of Nursing Action to Improve Environmental Conditions

## Brownfields in Los Angeles County By Don Thompson, Emergency Operations Section



Converting  
industrial/  
commercial  
properties into  
residential homes is  
an increasing trend  
in Los Angeles  
county

Over the past 20 years, the greater Los Angeles area has experienced a sharp decline in its manufacturing and industrial base resulting in an urban landscape rife with brownfields. The regions population growth, the limited amount of land and the need for housing and services in the area has brought attention to brownfields as a resource.

However, these issues are complex and evolving.

Brownfields are defined as abandoned, idle, or under-used properties where development, expansion, or reutilization is complicated by the real or perceived presence of hazardous materials. These brownfields create visual blight and pose potential health and safety risks for residents.

Converting industrial/ commercial properties (brownfield or not) into residential homes is an in-

creasing trend in Los Angeles county. Re-zoning industrial/ commercial properties into residential use requires a higher comfort level to neutralize liability fears when establishing cleanup levels and investigating exposure pathways. A new exposure pathway being promoted by the Federal and State Environmental Protection Agency is potential soil gas intrusion of volatile organic compounds into indoor air space. Assessment of this pathway concern may require a special risk assessment by a toxicologist.

To qualify for a State brownfield grant and loan, applicants must obtain oversight by a Cal/EPA agency. These oversight fees can be significant and may exceed the grant/loan amount. For some sites, Cal/EPA's fees can be the largest single expense incurred during the site assessment and cleanup process.

In response to cutbacks in the state government, a special Cal/EPA oversight program will be available to qualified brownfield sites. After an interested party submits an application for oversight from Cal/EPA, the site

will go through a screening process to be assigned to RWQCB or DTSC.

Los Angeles County is currently proposing its own Brownfield Policy to expedite development of those sites as follows:

- Develop policies and procedures for the cleanup of contaminated land.
- Adopt screening levels.
- Create an environmental review program to oversee cleanups of Los Angeles County owned properties and sites with pending Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.
- Hire personnel, mainly engineers and geologist, to oversee these site cleanups.

The proposed Los Angeles County brownfield program is based on the CEQA/EIR process and will be managed by the Los Angeles County Public Works Department.

In spite of the complexity and cost, the current upswing in the real estate market has made it profitable to voluntarily cleanup many brownfield properties.



## Heat Illness Prevention Regulation in Effect

*By Martha Delgado, Technical Service Unit*

Cal OSHA approved emergency regulations (Title 8 §3395) in August 2005 because of four heat-related California deaths. HHMD is among the Department's employees that routinely work outdoors. Sampling on a hot sunny day with Tyvek suits and respirators can create the possibility of a heat-related illness to occur. We will be arranging training on heat illness prevention soon. In the meantime, review the policies listed in EA-541. More information, including a Heat Index Chart or Permissible Heat Exposure Threshold Limit Values (Table III: 4-2.), can be found respectively at [www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh\\_publications/training](http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/training) and [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) Technical Manual under heat stress.



## Employee Assignments

By Kenji Mayeda, Technical Services Unit



**Sampling methodology training with Stan Townsend (in blue) and Memo Hernandez (not pictured)**

Pictured here from left to right are HMS I's:  
 Mathias Mekasha  
 Dan Zenarosa  
 Xinna Severino  
 Cyril Ogunnaya  
 Amanuel Gebresilasie  
 Gevork Ter Astvadsadrian  
 James Ly  
 Jeff Holwager  
 Daniel Yniguez  
 Arturo Mico

After working on a significant inspection project, ten new employees have been assigned to district offices. Eight came to HHMD from Environmental Health and two came from the Department of Public Works. They attended an intensive seven week HHMD Training Academy — six of which consisted of class room lectures, field trips to facilities, and on site inspection training. HHMD staff conducted the training with the help of a few outside guest speakers and UCLA-LOSH provided the forty hour HAZ-WOPER class at the UCLA Campus.

Baltazar, David  
 Biren, Paul  
 Childers, Darin  
 Clark, Richard  
 Coddling, Karen  
 Delgado, Martha  
 Nanadiego, Victor  
 Ngo, Caroline  
 Provost, Tom  
 Schweizer, Linda  
 Thompson, Don  
 Tresieras, Mario  
 Watanabe, Eiji  
 Westcott, Bill  
 Whitehead, Michael

05/05/05 SHMS promoted to Manager SOS from North INS  
 10/03/05 HMS III moved to EOS from Investigations  
 08/05/05 HMS II promoted to HMS III Cal ARP from North INS  
 12/19/05 HMS II promoted to HMS III Site Mitigation from East INS  
 01/05/05 HMS II moved to EOS from TSU ADM  
 09/21/05 HMS II moved to TSU Admin from West INS  
 02/05/05 SHMS moved to Cal ARP from West INS  
 07/05/05 ITC to Data Ops ADM  
 10/03/05 HMS II moved to EOS from Central INS  
 01/05/05 HMS II moved to EOS from Central INS  
 10/03/05 HMS III moved to EOS from Site Mitigation  
 03/05/05 HMS II promoted to SHMS from North INS  
 05/09/05 HMS II promoted to SHMS Southeast INS from Central INS  
 05/09/05 SHMS moved to North INS from SE INS  
 10/03/05 HMS II moved to TSU Admin from Central INS

*We are happy for  
 the staff that have  
 joined our division,  
 changed  
 sections/offices, or  
 been  
 promoted:*

## Aloha, George

By Miguel Garcia, Emergency Operations Section



George Baker retired after 15 years of county service. Originally from Eugene, Oregon, George came to the County in April of 1990 and bought with him a wealth of knowledge and many years of experience in a diversity of fields. He worked for a cannery, a paper mill, and a construction com-

pany, where he advanced to safety and mid-level management positions. He worked for Crosby and Overton, a hazmat clean-up company. He was a Certified Industrial Hygienist and member of several professional organizations. But private industry was just one area of his varied work experience. George had an extensive military career serving in Vietnam and later as a reserve in the

National Guard. He was assigned many different posts in the military among them a Cargo Master in the Philippines loading huge military cargo planes to airlift supplies to US troops all over the world. He also served in an artillery unit among all his other experiences. During his HHMD career, George, a 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant E-9, was an Operation Desert Storm hero assigned to the Chemical Warfare Agent Unit where his job was the detection and neutralization of chemical warfare agents.

With HHMD, George worked in several sections including Site Mitigation, CalARP, Inspections and EOS. In all his assignments he was enthusiastic, professional and concerned about doing a better than good job. There are many good words that describe George. The following is a short list from those who worked with him: "always willing to help; big

guy with a big heart; positive; jack of all trades; good humored; energetic; liked to have fun and able to get a little crazy; inquisitive; liked construction projects; supported fund raisers, liked to wear Hawaiian shirts; financial planning savvy; a source of good humor and encouragement to others; went the extra mile to help; team player; extremely punctual, pleasant to be around and always enthusiastic." From these comments you can see he will be missed.

George is now traveling all over the world with his wife. The last postcard we received was from the French Rivera. He loved Hawaii (his favorite subject) and regularly vacationed there in his condo by the sea. He always said he would be retiring there and so he has. We all wish George the best on his well deserved retirement and know that wherever he is, he is having a great time. Aloha.

## Richard's Recommendation



After 18 years of county service, Richard Feldman has some sage advice for all of us: "I highly recommend retirement."

Feldman, a native New Yorker, moved to California in 1975 to complete

his college education. Following graduation from UCLA with a Masters Degree in Environmental Science, his career with the County began in 1986 as an Environmental Health Specialist with the Department of Health Services. He worked for two years as a Registered

Environmental Health Specialist in the Compton area before accepting a position in the Hazardous Materials Control Program in 1988. Richard worked in the Inspection and Emergency Operations Sections. When Emergency Operations expanded in 1990, Richard was permanently assigned to the unit as one of the eighteen Hazardous Materials Specialist responders.

Although Richard spent the majority of his career responding to hazmat emergencies, he also distinguished himself in his mastery of the English language. His writing skills and superior intellect were often employed by managers, supervisors, and co-workers seeking assistance with

By Tony Payne, Investigations Unit

the composition of letters, policies, procedures, and numerous other documents. It should come as no surprise that Richard was employed as a teacher for three years prior to starting his career with the County. Everyone who has ever conversed with Richard can attest to being corrected on at least one occasion for the misuse or mispronunciation of a word.

Having studied the Civil War extensively, he is now traveling to battlefields and other historic sites. When asked how he occupies his time now that he is retired Richard replied "Doing exactly what I want: reading, writing, traveling, and exercising." How rich.

## Lohnes Sound

*By Walter Uroff, Emergency Operations Section*

After 31.5 years of dedicated LA County service, Mike Lohnes has officially retired. Although Mike had some rough years (back surgery December 2000, knee replacement surgery September 2003, spinal fusion surgery January 2005), he sounds like he is doing fine now and is ready to fully enjoy his retirement.

Mike grew up Monterey Park. His father was an Emmy winning camera man for his work at the Red Skelton Studio. He graduated from Loyola University in 1967, then joined the Navy and went to Vietnam, as part of an elite class of Swift Boat Captains. Mike was awarded a Purple Heart,

a Bronze Star for Heroism, and other medals for his service.

In November 1972, Mike started his career with LA County as an Assistant Sanitarian. In 1974, he went to work as a Sanitarian for Santa Cruz County. In 1976 Mike returned to the LA County Health Department as a Sanitarian. A few months later, Mike transferred to Health Facilities as a Health Facilities Surveyor, where he thought he would remain until retirement. However, in May of 1989 Mike applied to the Hazardous Materials Control Program (HMCP) (today known as HHMD). Within a year of joining the HMCP, Mike became an

emergency responder in the Emergency Operations Section, where he applied vast knowledge and an ability to work well with people in emergency situations.

Currently, Mike lives in Pasadena with his wife. Yes, Mike and Maggie married September 12, 2003. They are planning to move to the Seattle area soon where they are building a house overlooking Puget Sound on Fox Island. They hope to be completely moved by the end of 2006. We wish them many happy, healthy years, as they sit by the fire and look out over the Sound in beautiful Washington State.



**Mike Lohnes and Jose Ochoa knee-high in laughter**

## Ochoa on the Ball

*By Martha Delgado, Technical Services Unit*

Retiree Jose Ochoa has been a lifelong soccer enthusiast. He played soccer as a child in Mexico City and continued when he came to Los Angeles in 1955. His ability to play may have been hampered by military service in the Army medical corps, marriage, two sons, a bachelor's degree in science and a master's degree in occupational health but, his enthusiasm never diminished.

He joined the County Environmental Health Services (EHS) in 1973 as an Assistant Sanitarian and had a varied and satisfying career: Southwest District EHS in '76; Senior Sanitarian in ELA in '79; Health Facilities Evaluator in '80; Chief EHS for the South/Compton District; '81 Industrial Hygienist (IH) for

Occupational Health; '82 Supervising IH in the Haz Waste Control Program; in '83 Supervising HW Specialist in Emergency Response (EOS); '92 Hazardous Materials Manager—EOS and most recently managed the Special Operations Section.

During those working years he was involved with the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) as a coach, in administration and as a commissioner. But he most enjoyed officiating. In 1979 Jose became the first referee in the US to receive a National Badge, which allows one to officiate all levels including area, section, national and international games. In 1986, the Dutch Professional Soccer Federation came to an AYSO instructional camp presented by

Jose's famous demo group. Impressed with the program, they approached him about bringing the training group to Holland. As a result of that meeting, an instructional video for Dutch and US officials was filmed at PSD Stadium-Amsterdam in 1988.

Jose is happily singing in two Chapters of the Barbershop Harmony Society and teaching a few hazmat classes. In 2003, Jose was inducted in the AYSO Area "C" Hall of Fame for his officiating contributions and remains actively on the ball with this group.



## HHMD LA County CUPA Contact Number Reference

**Inspections** is responsible for inspecting and permitting businesses that generate hazardous waste in most cities in LA County. Hazardous materials handlers in county unincorporated areas and contract cities are also their responsibility. These responsibilities are distributed among six (6) geographic area district offices:

North (Sylmar)	(818) 364-7120
East (El Monte)	(626) 450-7450
Central (Commerce)	(323) 890-4107
Southeast (Paramount)	(562) 790-1810
Southwest (Lomita)	(310) 534-6270
West (Culver City)	(310) 348-1781

**Emergency Operations** provides 24-hr emergency response services to hazmat incidents in 90% of LA County & the City of La Habra.

**ER Coordinator (323) 890-4317**

Monday—Friday 7 am-5 pm  
After hours and on holidays call  
LA County Fire Dept Dispatch (323) 881-2455  
ask for **Health Haz Mat ER**.

**Financial Management** maintains records of accounts paid and accounts due. Clients must have business location address and should have invoice/statement available.

**FMD (323) 881-2345**

**HHMD Headquarters**  
**5825 Rickenbacker Road**  
**Commerce 90040**

**Front Desk (323) 890-4045**  
takes calls for the following units:

**Cal ARP** Unit administers & enforces the Cal ARP program and its Risk Management Plans. Ask for Cal ARP.

**Data Operations** keeps track of Business Plans and/or Inventories submitted. Ask for Data Ops.

**Investigations** looks into cases of illegal disposal that are occurring at the time of the call and likely to continue until arrival. Ask for Investigations. After hours and on holidays call LA County Fire Dept Dispatch (323) 881-2455 ask for **Health Haz Mat Investigations**.

**Site Mitigation** unit provides voluntary oversight for remediation of contaminated sites. Ask for Site Mitigation.

**Technical Services** conducts CUPA oversight, assists PA's and maintains the website. Ask for Admin or email us at [askhhmd@lacofd.org](mailto:askhhmd@lacofd.org)

### Communications continued from page 5

Health Services (Radiation Management, Environmental Health, the Public Health Lab, and Acute Communicable Disease Control). We can also talk to the Safety Police, the District Attorney, Animal



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Care and Control and the Office of Emergency Management.

We will have disaster channels when activated by the EOC, mutual aid channels and of course direct (line of sight) channels. Please note that not all of the county agencies we can communicate with have been mentioned above. Finally, there is an Emergency button we can depress if the person using the radio goes down and

cannot talk. The emergency signal is picked up by the HHMD HQ base station and the ERC will know which radio is sending the signal and therefore which person is down.

As of the date of this article, radio programming and charger installations have been completed as well as radio use training for EOS, Investigations and Inspections.

### Many Apply

The loss of technical staff due to retirement or separation has caused HHMD to start the hiring process only a little more than six months after filling 10 vacancies. Over 100 applicants for 8 Hazardous Material Specialist I positions were scheduled for interviews January 2006. Those interviewed have now received their scores by mail and the eligibility list has been promulgated. Employment interviews will take place in March starting with those candidates in the highest bands until the available vacancies are filled. We all look forward to filling these positions.



Ever wished you could look up the status of things you've ordered? Look for email instructions soon that will enable you to track the status of your orders through the HHMD shared directory..



**Bill Jones**

Chief  
Health Hazardous  
Materials Division

#### *Haz Mat Release*

is an effort to foster an exchange of information. We welcome any questions or comments.

**Martha Delgado**

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